

Special Education Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes
Montana School for the Deaf and Blind
3911 Central Avenue
Great Falls, Montana
April 18-19, 2006

Members in Attendance: WyAnn Northrop, Holly Raser, Diana Colgrove, Gary Perleberg, Dick Slonaker, Dave Mahon, Janet Jansen, Norma Wadsworth, Barb Rolf, Ron Fuller

Excused Members: Robert Maffit, Terry Teichrow, Cody Sinnott, Bob Peake, Amy McCord, Coral Beck

Non-Members in Attendance: Bob Runkel, Marilyn Pearson, Pat Reichert, Mike Waterman, Steve Gettel, Sib Clack

Tuesday, April 18, 2006

Chairperson WyAnn Northrop called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The Panel members and guests introduced themselves. Chairperson Northrop requested that the Panel members review the Proposed Agenda. Following review of the Proposed Agenda, Gary Perleberg moved to accept the Proposed Agenda, Ron Fuller seconded the motion and the motion passed. The minutes of the February 9-10, 2006, meeting were reviewed and Dick Slonaker moved to accept the minutes and Diana Colgrove seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved as written.

Welcome to the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB)

Steve Gettel, MSDB Superintendent, welcomed the Panel members and guests to the MSDB. Steve presented early history of the school. The school is funded by the state General Fund, flow-through funds (OPI) and state lands' funds. Steve said that the MSDB has a School Improvement Plan and is monitored the same as the school districts.

Steve noted that the MSDB serves two primary functions: First, by the use of specialized instruction and training the MSDB provides an education for deaf and blind children that is commensurate with the education provided to non-disabled children in the local school districts. Second, the MSDB serves as a consultative resource for parents of deaf and blind children not yet enrolled in an educational program and for school districts where deaf and blind children are enrolled.

Steve distributed information regarding the goals of the MSDB.

Special Education Child Count: Statewide Data

Pat Reichert presented an overview of the data that is collected and how it is collected. There are currently five data collections in which data is collected for six reports that must be submitted to the federal government each year. The reports are: Child Count, Special Education Personnel, Setting of Service, Exiting, School Discipline and Assessment. Pat explained that she manages two data collections—Child Count and Exiting Data, which are strictly special education data.

Pat shares the school discipline data collection with the Health Enhancement Division, which needs the data on all students for their federal reporting requirements on gun-free schools and safe and drug-free schools, as well as using the data to calculate persistently dangerous school designations in Montana.

Personnel Data are collected through the Annual Data Collection, which is a huge data collection that takes place in the fall of the year and collects data for many divisions at the OPI.

Web applications are available for school districts to report all of this data. Approximately 98 percent of the districts in the state submit their data electronically. With electronic submission the data are only reported once, which eliminates many of the typing errors seen and the applications have validation checks built in that make the user report correct data.

Child Count/Enrollment Tables

Pat distributed a sheet of tables containing special education data that the Panel might be interested in. The first page of the handout is a comparison between total enrollment and special education child count.

Pat said that enrollment is a count of all students enrolled in public schools and publicly funded schools in the state from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The count is taken on the first of October and is collected through the Annual Data Collection.

Child Count is a count of students with disabilities, ages 3-22 who qualify for services, in public schools, publicly funded schools, residential treatment facilities that have a contract with the OPI to provide services to their Montana residents, and students with disabilities who qualify for services enrolled by their parents in private schools who are receiving services from a public schools in accordance with a services plan. The count is collected in December.

Dominant Disability Tables

For those not familiar with the term "Dominant Disability," it is: school districts report their students with all disabilities that they have been identified as qualifying under. Because the data reported must be reported using just one disability, a dominant disability must be determined for each student that is reported with more than one disability. The category of learning disabilities has decreased over the five years of data shown and speech/language impairment has increased.

The category of child with disabilities has decreased. This category is unique to Montana and is not recognized by the federal government used for children ages 3-5. This past year, the administrative rule was amended to redefine child with disabilities as "developmental delay," a category that the Department of Education does recognize.

Race/Ethnicity

Pat discussed the comparison of the students with disabilities and total student enrollment by race. In an average across five years, there are about 4 percent fewer students with disabilities who are white than there are in the total student population. There is a higher percentage of students that are American Indian identified as students with disabilities than there are American Indian in the total student population. That percentage difference has decreased by about 1 percent over five years.

Setting of Service

Pat told the Panel that Setting of Service for students with disabilities is the setting where students receive the majority of their special education services. For ages 3-5, there has been a shift from reporting children in the early childhood setting to part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education setting. For ages 6-21, there is a slight shift from least restrictive to more restrictive settings.

New Reporting Requirements

Pat said there are some new reporting requirements that are making data collection and reporting more challenging and more time consuming.

Assessment

Pat reported that this past year was the first year that assessment data was reported in the same manner as the other well-established data collections like child count. She said that it was a challenge because we did not have access to the data tables for assessment and needed to have the data provided to us by other individuals in the office. Also, there was no way of validating the data to ensure accuracy and this was a problem this year because we reported assessment data in December with the State Performance Plan and then were required to report it again in February through a specific data table now required by OSEP.

To hopefully alleviate this problem, special education has developed an all-encompassing report that includes data requirements from the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance report and the federal assessment report that we will provide to the assessment personnel to fill out and return to us in November. We will then use that data for all our data requirements in the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report and the Federal Assessment Report.

Pat also discussed the data collections that will be required based on performance indicators from the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report: Preschool Outcomes Data; Post-School Outcomes Data; School Discipline (the federal government decided last year to begin collecting data on in-school suspensions for students with disabilities); Setting of Service Codes (setting of service codes for 3-5 year-old children will be significantly modified starting with next year's child count).

Education Data Exchange Network (EDEN)

Pat reported that the U.S. Department of Education, through collaboration with state education agencies and industry partners, launched a new system of transferring data from states to the federal government. The goal is to improve the quality and timeliness of education information and reduce duplication of data submissions.

Following the lunch break, the Panel observed the Technology Class with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students.

Special Education Funding

Bob Runkel and Mike Waterman, Financial Specialist, Department of Operations, reported on funding for Special Education. The funding comes from the General Fund (for basic operating), IDEA funds and Tuition. All districts that 1) operate a special education program, 2) belong to a

cooperative, or 3) have an agreement with another public entity to provide services receive state special education funding. The state special education allocation is divided into four sections: Disproportionate Cost Reimbursement; Cooperative Administration/Travel; Instructional Block Grant; and Related Services Block Grant. The Instructional Block Grant is made up of 52.5 percent of the state special education allocation, is funded on a per-student basis, is paid directly to the district and requires a match from the district. The Related Services Block Grant has 17.5 percent of the state special education allocation, is funded on a per-student basis, is paid to the district, or if member, to the Cooperative and requires a match from the district. The Disproportionate Costs Reimbursement contains 25 percent of the state special education allocation, is paid directly to the district (with block grants), has no match requirement, and 40 percent of the costs above threshold are reimbursed. The Administrative, Travel Cost Payments to Cooperatives contains 5 percent of the state special education allocation and the distribution is paid directly to the cooperatives, 60 percent is based on ANB counts of member districts and 40 percent is based on distances, population, densities and number of itinerant personnel.

For Mandatory Local Special Education Funding, a local match is required for the Instructional Block Grant and the Related Services Block Grant; the match amount is one dollar local for every three dollars state; and the ensuing year's state payment is reduced if the match is not met.

The Special Education Funding is not the trustees' decision, it is by law. Included in the Base (minimum) General Fund budget are the Instructional Block Grant, Related Services Block Grant, a match requirement and the Disproportionate Cost Reimbursement.

Special Education Tuition is payable in the year following the year of attendance and is not necessarily subject to General Fund budget caps.

The Transition Experience

Barb Rolf showed a video of her daughter, Katie, and the result of Katie's transition from regular school, cane traveling, functional programs, the issue of her blindness, and into the working world. She said that Katie profited from being born into a family of educators. Barb returned to school after Katie was born and became a teacher of the visually impaired. There were many positive results and many complications in Katy's transition processes. The video shows the "Katie's Kookies" (kookies for doggies) business that Katy, with help from her mother and grandmother, has developed. The Kookies are produced with no preservatives. The "Kookie" business has grown to the point that decisions will have to be made as to whether it could be enlarged to accommodate the increase in orders. Katy provided sample packages of the "Katie's Kookies" for Panel members.

Following Barb Rolf's presentation, the Panel observed the boys in the Independent Living Skills Program prepare dinner.

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

The Panel began the morning with an observation of the "Communications with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Preschool Students." This observation was actually a "hand-on" approach for the Panel members and the non-members in attendance. The members actually participated in the activities with the students.

The Panel then observed the "Language Arts for Visually Impaired Students Learning Braille Using JAWS, MAGIC and the Braille Lite.

OPI Update

General Supervision Enhancement Grant: Assessment

Bob Runkel informed the Panel that the OPI won the competitive grant for the *Technical Assistance on State Data Collection—IDEA General Supervision Enhancement Grant*.

This grant is for funding for a planning grant to enhance Montana's current comprehensive assessment system. The proposal was motivated by the recognition that current assessment options do not meet the needs of a segment of the population of students with disabilities. The project partners will gather information about the unmet needs of these students and use the information to explore the possibility of a new, valid assessment. The grant will inform the state of the feasibility of developing a test that can be designed without a lot of cost and teacher time.

OSEP Monitoring

Bob Runkel informed the Panel that the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, will be visiting Montana during the week of September 13-15, 2006. The OSEP staff will meet with state staff that are involved in, and responsible for, the oversight of monitoring activities, collection and analysis of state-reported data, and ensuring the participation and reporting on the performance of children in statewide assessments.

Bob suggested that the Panel members plan to come to Helena at this time for a meeting and then meet the OSEP staff. The Special Education Division has historically engaged Panel members in monitoring visits with OSEP.

IDEA Update

Bob Runkel reported that the final regulations will, hopefully, be out before September.

Parent Involvement: Performance Indicator #8

Bob Runkel told the Panel that Parents, Let's Unite for Kids has applied to the Department of Education for the Parent Information and Resource Center to provide information/coordination to assist parents and schools throughout Montana. Bob Runkel will write a letter of support from the Division of Special Education. Chair WyAnn Northrop suggested that the Panel also write a letter of support and asked for a motion to support PLUK. Norma Wadsworth moved that the Special Education Advisory Panel writes a letter of support for PLUK's application for the Parent Information and Resource Center. Janet Jansen seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Bob discussed the proposed sampling approach for the State Performance Plan Parent Involvement Performance Indicator #8. Montana proposed a method to survey all parents in all schools that are scheduled for an upcoming compliance monitoring. All schools are monitored every five years. As a result, eventually every parent should be surveyed. The information collected would be useful for the monitors.

E-Grants

Marilyn Pearson gave an update on the E-Grants. The OPI has contracted with a company (MTW) to develop an E-Grant System. The purpose is to produce a Web-based application to be used by all federal programs for applicants to submit their applications electronically. The intent is to have the system up and running in the spring of 2007. Norma Wadsworth asked if the system would include state funds applications. Marilyn said it would not.

Special Education Records and Information Management System

Bob Runkel informed the Panel that the "Infinite Campus" company was informed of the committee's intention to select them to produce the "Special Education Records and Information Management System." This is the only company in the United States that has integrated general education and special education and applied the system on a statewide basis. Bob also noted that the company's product is fairly well-balanced for all three integrated systems (special education, student information, and data warehouse) and the price was very reasonable. With the Infinite Campus, there is the advantage of further software development financed by other states would be provided to Montana at no extra cost. The timeline for the system to be up and running is about 18 months (July 2007).

Post-Secondary Outcomes: Performance Indicator #14

Marilyn Pearson distributed the draft "Post-School Data Collection Protocol" regarding Performance Indicator #14. The information offered an optional, but practical and uniform, way for collecting data on post-school outcomes of adolescents with disabilities who leave public school and enter young adult roles. It offers states a way to collect essential information for the Part B State Performance Plan (SPP) and the Annual Performance Report (APR) for Indicator #14.

Marilyn stated that the draft Post-School Data Collection Protocol will very likely be similar to one that will be required by OSEP.

Disproportionate Representation: Performance Indicators #9 and #10

Marilyn Pearson reported that an analysis tool to determine which schools have disproportionate representation as a result of inappropriate identification is in the process of development. The analysis tool will consist of investigative questions which address accuracy and validation of data, district's resources and procedures to address student needs prior to referral to special education, and district's identification procedures for determining that a student is IDEA eligible.

Braille Instruction

Bob Runkel announced that a work group charged with the responsibility to propose standards for instructors of Braille will be formed with members representing the following: Montana School Boards Association (MTSBA), MEA/AFT, Parents, Lets Unite for Kids (PLUK), Montana Association for the Blind (MAB), Montana Association of School Superintendents (MASS), Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB), the Office of Public Instruction, Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE), Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC), and the Montana Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals (MAEMSP). The composition of the work group is intended to provide a broad cross-section of educators and consumers directly affected by the establishment of

requirements for training and supervision of instructors of Braille. The goal of the task force is to develop a workable system to ensure that instructors of Braille are skilled providers.

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening

Sib Clack said that Legislation was passed in 2001 (HB 468) for a statewide universal newborn hearing screening, tracking and intervention program. There is a task force on hearing loss in newborn infants for the purpose of advising the Department of Public Health and Human Services on the collection and reporting of information from the hospitals and other sources and providing recommendations to the department, hospitals, other health care providers and the public on the full continuum of needed services from screening through intervention. The Task Force is developing a formal report of those recommendations.

Sib reported that even though each licensed hospital, health care facility, or health care provider that provides services to parents of infants born in the hospital or health care facility provide education to parents, we are still losing some of the babies at screening—about 4 percent. Of the 96 percent of babies that receive screening, 91 percent passed; 9 percent may not have passed. Sib said that 4 percent lost is too many. Sib said that once identified/diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing, the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind takes over its statutory authority to track those children through their educational career and/or provide consultation or intervention services.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting (Tentative Agenda)

Elections for Panel
Parent Involvement (Title 1—Terry Teichrow)
Personnel Grant—Susan Bailey-Anderson
Differentiated Instruction "We Teach All"
Capital High School—Pilot
Division Administrators (Perhaps Next Year)
RtI Update
Funding Follow-Up
Post Graduate Survey—Larry Wexler

Adjourn

Dave Mahon Moved to adjourn the meeting, Gary Perleberg seconded the motion and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at noon.